Navigating Legal Risks and Opportunities of Climate Change in a Fragmented World

Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment
University of Oxford







In a world grappling with geopolitical instability, disruptive climate change and an unprecedented and contested transition of our societies towards net zero, climate-related legal action has emerged as a critical force shaping the future of business, government, and society.

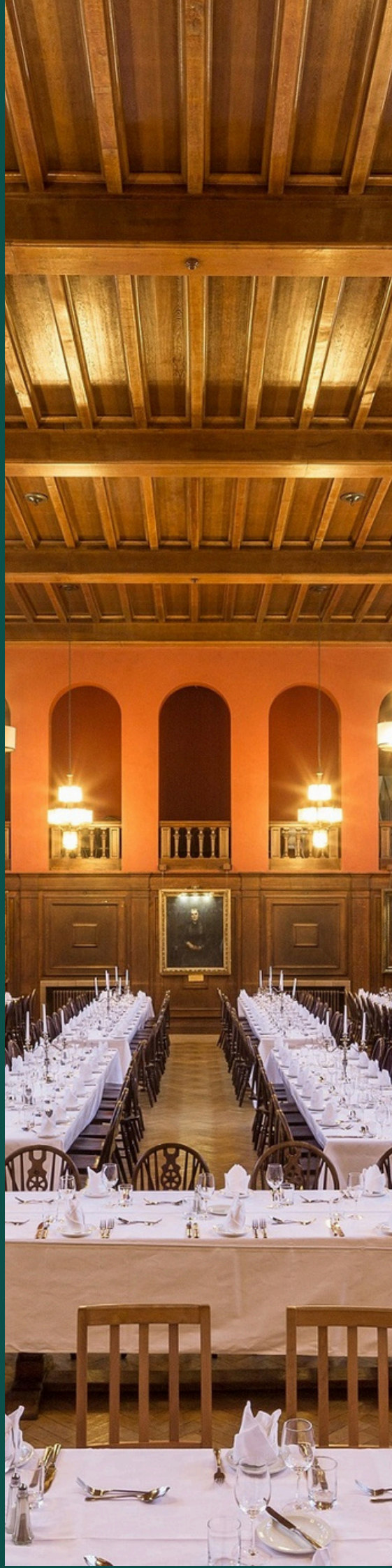
Without an understanding of how law and regulation is evolving, including the science underpinning these changes and the geopolitical developments shaping them, business leaders, litigators, and government officials are flying blind in the face of shifting financial risks.

With growing geopolitical instability and the world on the cusp of breaching the 1.5°C goal set by the Paris Agreement, legal drivers of climate risk have never felt more uncertain.

In this context, understanding the intersection of law and climate change has become paramount for senior leaders and their advisors.

The University of Oxford is proud to introduce the third iteration of its executive education course designed around these challenges.

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Top right:Lady Margaret Hall
Bottom row: University of Oxford



Why climate change and the law matters

Climate litigation, new regulation, and emerging policy holds the potential to change the landscape of risks and opportunities for a wide range of sectors and government authorities. Simultaneously, these developments buffer institutions against the politically turbulent contexts in which they are increasingly operating. This course demystifies the changing nature of climate risk in 2027.

Those unprepared for these changes expose themselves to significant financial, legal, and reputational risks, while informed and forward-looking experts may find opportunities for transformative, positive change that benefits their organisations and stakeholders. Understanding the implications of 1.5°C overshoot for the resilience of corporate and national policies will soon become an unescapable challenge. Those that are ahead of the curve will thrive.

Across the world, political priorities, geopolitical rivalries, technological advancements, climate policy and corporate action have shifted dramatically in recent years. At the same time, the state of scientific knowledge and the climate system continue to evolve at similar pace, providing clear warnings about the risk of inaction. We will consider the impacts of these changes, including on firm-level climate risk. Against emerging geopolitical tension, navigating these questions has heightened salience.



Photo credit: University of Oxford

The course

This three-day course explores legal risks and opportunities that are emerging as the law adapts to climate change in a fragmented world.

Delivered by eminent Oxford faculty and practitioners, the course is grounded in our world-leading research. Oxford's Navigating Legal Risks and Opportunities of Climate Change in a Fragmented World Executive Education Programme will examine and discuss key legal and regulatory developments in the context of climate change and relevant scientific, political, and economic developments, and the practical implications of these developments for firms and the economy as a whole.

Whether your work and interests lie in government, law, professional services, business, non-profit advocacy, or elsewhere, this immersive and interactive course will equip you with the knowledge, insight, and connections to understand and navigate the rapidly evolving legal landscape. You will be prepared to anticipate future directions in climate-related legal action, and thrive in a world where climate, economics, geopolitics, policy, and law are increasingly salient and intertwined.

Topics include:

- Understanding international legal frameworks relating to climate change in the context of 1.5°C overshoot.
- Latest advances in scientific understanding of climate change impacts and the legal significance of these developments.
- A review of climate litigation and policy changes in the context of geopolitical upheaval and fragmentation.
- State of the art in the science, politics, and economics of net climate change.
- An economic analysis of legal risks and opportunities resulting from climate-related legal actions.





Throughout the programme participants will:

Obtain a birds-eye-view of the key trends and future directions of climate-related legal actions and their impacts on society and businesses

Gain proficiency in analysing and interpreting complex legal issues related to climate change, enabling you to identify and evaluate potential solutions and strategies and their impacts on businesses, government, and non-profit activities

Dive deep into critical topics at the intersection of climate change, including the latest developments in climate policy and geopolitics, climate litigation, and climate science

Appreciate how climate-related legal actions affect the nature, magnitude, and distribution of financial climate risk exposures – gaining a deep insight into the economic and financial implications of climate-related legal actions that builds on the latest available science and legal trends

Build a strong international network of like-minded professionals from diverse backgrounds and industries, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing

Immerse in a unique academic and cultural environment including traditional Oxford customs such as a candlelit college dinner, punting on the River Cherwell, and a historical city tour



Photo credit: University of Oxford

Speakers



Thom Wetzer Co-Director, Associate Professor of Law and Finance, Faculty of Law, Oxford Sustainable Law Programme



Rupert Stuart-Smith Co-Director, Senior Researcher in Climate Science and the Law, Oxford Sustainable Law Programme



Cameron Hepburn Battcock Professor of Environmental Economics



Melina De Bona Research Associate in Greenwashing Analysis at the Oxford SLP and a member of the Climate Litigation Lab



Lavanya Rajamani Professor of International Environmental Law, Faculty of Law



Benjamin Franta Associate Professor of Climate Litigation



Thomas Hale Professor of Public Policy (Global Public Policy), Blavatnik School of Government



Ewan White DPhil candidate in Law at the University of Oxford



Peter Barnett Honorary Research Associate at SLP



Nele Schuldt Researcher in Human Rights and Climate Change Law at SLP



Nicholas Young Research Fellow in Sustainable Business Law in the Oxford SLP



Emma Lecavalier Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Oxford Climate Policy Hub

Programme structure

Day	Time (BST)	Session
Tuesday 8th June 2027	14:00 onwards	Arrival to accommodation at Cotswold Lodge Hotel
Day 1 **Wednesday 9th June 2027**	09:00-10:15	Climate change and legal disruption with Thom Wetzer
Law and science in a 1.5°C overshoot world	10:30-11:30	Approaching overshoot: a scientific introduction to climate change in 2027 with Rupert Stuart-Smith
	11:45-13:00	The international legal framework for climate action in an overshoot world with Lavanya Rajamani
	14:15-15:30	Practitioner panel discussion: climate-related legal action in a fragmented world
	16:00-17:15	The economics and politics of a rapid net zero transition with Cameron Hepburn & Thomas Hale
	Evening	Dinner

Day	Time (BST)	Session
Day 2 **Thursday 10th June 2027**	09:00-9:50	The science of climate change mitigation in 2027 with Rupert Stuart-Smith
Delivering climate change mitigation	10:00-11:30	Corporate climate transitions done right
	11:45-12:45	Corporate climate action with Thom Wetzer
	13:45-15:00	Legal insulation: navigating legal obstacles to decarbonization with Thom Wetzer
	15:15-16:30	Legal and policy drivers of state and corporate climate action with Emma Lecavalier, Ewan White, Nele Schuldt
	16:45-18:00	Mock trial with Nick Young, Melina De Bona & Pete Barnett
	Evening	Dinner

Day	Time (BST)	Session
Day 3 **Friday 11th June 2027**	09:00–10:45	From emissions to impacts: climate change attribution science with Rupert Stuart-Smith
Who pays for climate change impacts?	11:00–12:45	Interactive workshop: enacting the polluter pays principle with Thom Wetzer & Benjamin Franta
	14:00–15:30	Legal risk case studies
	15:30–16:30	Assessing climate-related legal risk with Thom Wetzer and Rupert Stuart-Smith
	16:45–17:45	Closing talk and discussion with Rupert Stuart-Smith and Thom Wetzer *
	Evening	Final formal dinner Check out of accommodation by 10:00 on Saturday 12th June 2027

* Further speakers to be confirmed

The Oxford Sustainable Law Programme at the University of Oxford

The Oxford Sustainable Law Programme is a multidisciplinary, solution-focused research centre that develops decision-relevant, robust, and evidence-based knowledge. The Programme works to:

- Conduct world-leading and actionable research that facilitates the systemic changes needed to equitably address the world's biggest sustainability challenges;
- Deliver impact-focused education to students at Oxford and partner organisations, and to the wider legal and scientific communities through our executive education programmes;
- Engage with a wide range of partners in the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors to translate research insight into practical application in response to the most acute sustainability challenges.

To find out more about our work and keep up-to-date, please follow this link to our website:

www.smithschool.ox.ac.uk/programme/oxford-sustainable-law-programme



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The Oxford experience

The course will be held at Lady Margaret Hall, founded in 1878 with nine women, was the first women's college at the University of Oxford, playing a pioneering role in opening higher education to women. Today, it combines a rich academic heritage with a welcoming and inspiring environment for learning and intellectual exchange.

The impressive Talbot Building stands at the far end of Wolfson Quad, and the main doors from the Quad open onto the reception space for Talbot Hall.

Built as the College Dining Hall in 1910, Talbot Hall is a large wood-panelled room and a truly grand space that will host the programme's lectures. Long windows line one wall, and the room is hung with portraits of College Fellows and alumni.

The optional accommodation is at the Cotswold Lodge Hotel, a charming four-star hotel housed in an elegant Victorian building that combines traditional Oxford character with modern comfort. Located in a peaceful residential area just a short walk from Lady Margaret Hall and Oxford's historic centre, it offers a welcoming and convenient stay for programme participants.

During the course you will be immersed in the Oxford experience, with stylish formal dinner and drinks receptions and the opportunity to see Oxford at its best with informal activities such as a historic walking tour and the age-old Oxford tradition of punting on the River Cherwell.

Photo credit: Lady Margaret Hall

Executive Education at the Oxford Smith School

Teaching is at the heart of the Oxford Smith School. We are experienced in providing executive sustainability impact to FTSE100 companies, global professional service firms and some of the world's largest financial institutions. We work carefully with clients on interventions tailored to differing knowledge levels and audiences.



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For more information, please email:

executive.education@smithschool.ox.ac.uk

Testimonials

The Law and Sustainability Programme is probably the best short-term training out there for anyone working on climate litigation. You get professors who are right at the cutting edge, and the mix of students is so well chosen that you end up building real, lasting professional and sometimes also genuine friendships.

Brice Laniyan, Litigation and Advocacy Officer, Notre Affaire à Tous, France (2025 Cohort)

The program brought together experts in law, economics, policy and science from all over the world. in a unique way. Climate change regulation is a crosscutting area that requires all these inputs and other programs do not offer the level of expertise and cross-linkage in a short course that this program offered.

Wangui Kaniaru, Partner, Anjarwalla & Khanna LLP, Kenya (2024 Cohort)

I particularly enjoyed the different angles that the course focuses on: the economic, social and climate science aspects.

Punam Mehta,
Group General Counsel,
Longevity Partners, UK (2024 Cohort)

As someone directly involved in drafting Mongolia's first climate change law, this programme provided invaluable knowledge, practical insights and international perspectives to support our country's climate agenda.

Munkhbat Duusuren, Former secretary of Climate Change Law Working Group, Mongolian Ministry of Economy and Development, Mongolia (2025 cohort)

I'm delighted to have participated in this excellent programme, tailored for practitioners from around the globe who are faced with real-world challenges. Some key takeaways include a deeper understanding of cutting-edge climate attribution science, the latest economic, political and legal trends of the climate transition, and grasping of risks and opportunities faced by the private and public sectors alike.

Sarah Martin, Legal expert - Sustainable Food Systems, ClientEarth, Belgium (2025 Cohort)

You can dive into the City of Oxford and network with great professionals who are working on climate related issues.

Jessica Monteiro, Associate Director, UBS, Brazil (2024 Cohort)

Highly informative and relevant programme which gives you insight in the legal framework and a scientific understanding of climate change and the financial impacts it has, taught by experts in a stimulating environment.

Marike van Kooten, Lawyer and Legal Advisor (and Deputy Head team Legal Affairs), Privincie Groningen, Netherlands (2025 Cohort)

The whole immersive experience was excellent. From the initial communication, right through to delivery, every aspect was exceptional. I am so utterly grateful to everyone involved, thank you.

Hannah Dennehey,
Head of Client Relations - DRHC I Mediator Head of Client Relations - DRHC I Mediator, Abu Dhabi Global Market (ADGM) UAE. (2024 Cohort)

A broad exposé of climate and law... [the course] is a really good way of acquiring or refreshing your familiarity with the context of law and climate in a way you couldn't do by reading a few articles yourself.

Jeff Twentyman,
Director of Green Finance Institute and former Chair of Sustainability at Slaughter and May, UK (2024 Cohort)



